

admonition does not condition the grant of accreditation, but failure to respond to it could result in a subsequent negative action.

2-3-200—ACCREDITATION DEFERRED

When an institution is measured against the criteria and is found to be in marginal compliance, or there is insufficient evidence available for the Council to make a decision, ACICS may defer action until a later date pending receipt of additional information. In such cases, ACICS will provide in writing the reasons for the deferral, state what the institution needs to provide, and invite a response to the findings by a specific date.

Deferral is, in effect, "no action at this time" and is not a negative action. Therefore, deferral is not an appealable action. Neither is a deferral a final action. In all cases of deferral on reevaluation of accredited institutions, the Council will extend the present grant of accreditation for a period sufficient for the institution to provide the information needed, including time for procedural due process following the Council's review of the information.

2-3-300—ACCREDITATION DENIED

Denial of an accredited status is characterized by the Council as a "withholding" action and is differentiated from suspension of accreditation, which is a "withdrawal" action. There are two levels of denial. One totally withholds accreditation of the institution or a branch; the other denies approval of a requested substantive change. Denial at either level constitutes a negative action and is challengeable by the institution. The process of challenge, however, is different for each level of denial as separately described in Sections 2-3-301, 2-3-302, and 2-3-303. In all cases of denial, the Council will give the institution written reasons for the denial, which are subject to modification through the appeals processes as later described and explained. Denial actions that are not appealed in accordance with the appeals procedures provided by the Council are considered final actions.

2-3-301. *Denial of Initial Grant.* An institution that objects to a Council decision to deny an application for an initial grant of accreditation has the right and will be given the opportunity to present its case and to be heard at the next meeting of the Review Board. At such a hearing, the institution may not present new evidence for consideration and must follow the procedures described in Section 2-3-600.

2-3-302. *Denial of New Grant, Branch Inclusion, or Change of Ownership/Control.* An institution that objects to a Council decision to deny an application for a new grant of accreditation, inclusion of a branch campus, or reinstatement of accreditation following a change of ownership or control has the right and will be given the opportunity to present its case and to be heard pursuant to the hearing procedures described in Section 2-3-500.

Additionally, in cases of denial of a new grant, branch inclusion or reinstatement of accreditation following a change of ownership or control, the Council may place the institution on probation as described in Section 2-3-800.

2-3-303. *Other Denial Actions Not Affecting Overall Accreditation.* An institution that objects to a Council decision to deny an application for branch-to-freestanding status or new program inclusion will be given the opportunity to present its case to a panel of the Council and to be heard at a subsequent regularly scheduled meeting of the Council. The institution may offer new evidence that will be considered by the Council if timely submitted.

2-3-304. *Subsequent Action.* After consideration of the institution's objection to the denial and any new evidence presented, the Council may affirm, modify, or reverse its previous decision. If the denial of a new grant, branch inclusion, or change of ownership or control is affirmed, the denial action may be appealed to the Review Board pursuant to Section 2-3-600. If the denial not affecting overall accreditation as described in Section 2-3-303 is affirmed, the denial action becomes final and no further remedy is available to the institution. In all cases of denial, the

Council retains discretion to specify whether and under what conditions the institution might initiate a request for consideration of the same type of application.

2-3-400—ACCREDITATION WITHDRAWN

"Withdrawal of accreditation" differs from "denial of accreditation" in that denial rejects an institution's application for an initial grant of accreditation or for a new grant to take effect upon the expiration of an existing grant of accreditation; withdrawal of accreditation takes away a current grant of accreditation before its expiration. Accreditation may be withdrawn from an institution through two types of Council action: "revocation of accreditation" or "suspension of accreditation."

2-3-401. *Revocation.* Revocation occurs without a hearing for any of the following reasons:

- (a) An institution notifies the Council that it has ceased operation.
- (b) An institution whose accreditation has been summarily suspended does not challenge the suspension within 10 days of receipt of the suspension notice (see Section 2-2-301).
- (c) The institution fails to file an annual report as required by the Council (see Sections 2-1-801 and 2-1-802).
- (d) The institution fails to pay its annual fees, application fees, other assessed fees, or evaluation expenses (see Section 2-1-804).

A revocation action is not appealable. It requires an institution to start anew and to undergo the entire accreditation process to regain accreditation.

2-3-402. *Suspension.* Suspension of accreditation may occur when, in the judgment of ACICS, an institution no longer complies with the criteria.

By way of illustration, ACICS might issue an order of suspension for reasons such as the following:

- (a) The institution or any of its components (a branch or new program, for example), is evaluated as directed by ACICS and is determined not to be in compliance with the criteria.
- (b) Periodic required reports filed by the institution fail to conform to Council reporting requirements.
- (c) The institution makes substantial or significant change, without notice to ACICS, in its operation, structure, governance, ownership, control, location, facilities, or programs of study.
- (d) The institution fails to respond to or cooperate with attempts by the Council to make arrangements for a site evaluation.
- (e) The institution has deviated from the criteria or other directives of ACICS.
- (f) The institution fails to disclose any agreements, options, or other contractual arrangements between the institution and other parties which bear on the management or control of the main campus or its nonmain campuses.

In all cases of suspension, the Council retains discretion to specify whether and under what conditions the institution might apply for an initial grant of accreditation.

2-3-403. *Show-Cause Directive.* When the accreditation of an institution is subject to suspension action (other than summary suspension under Section 2-2-301), the institution will be provided in writing with the alleged deficiencies and will be invited to "show cause" why its accreditation should not be suspended or otherwise conditioned.

A show-cause directive is not a negative or conditioning action. Rather, it is issued to an institution for it to come forward and prove that a negative or conditioning action should not be taken. However, the opportunity to show cause before the Council will be considered to be a hearing as defined in Section 2-3-500. A suspension order may be issued by ACICS as the result of this hearing, and such action is considered a final action which may only be appealed to the Review Board as described in Section 2-3-600.

In many circumstances, it is possible for an institution to respond to a show-cause directive in writing by which it demonstrates correction of the condition upon which the directive was based. When the reasons for the show-cause are satisfied, the directive may be lifted either by the Executive Director in cases where no evaluation is involved or by ACICS in cases where evaluation of additional material is required and following such evaluation. All institutions directed by the Council to show cause why their accreditation should not be suspended or otherwise conditioned will be directed to submit a school closure plan and may be required to submit a teach-out agreement as described in Section 2-2-303 of the *Accreditation Criteria*.

2-3-404. Procedural Guarantees. In all cases where accreditation is subject to withdrawal by suspension under Section 2-3-402, the institution is afforded the following procedural guarantees:

- (a) Opportunity for a hearing before ACICS on all material issues in controversy.
- (b) Written prior notice of the proceedings, the charges levied, and the standards by which the institution ultimately is to be judged.
- (c) A decision on the record alone and a statement of reasons for the ultimate decision.
- (d) A right of appeal as provided in Section 2-3-600.
- (e) If the Review Board affirms the withdrawal of accreditation by way of suspension, the appeal shall be deemed to be finally disposed of upon issuance of the decision and publication will be made as described in Section 2-3-607.

2-3-500–COUNCIL HEARING PROCEDURES

The following procedures will govern hearings to be held before the Council:

- (a) The request for a hearing must be made by a date determined by the Council, which will not be less than 10 days from the date of receipt of the letter of notification of the denial action or show-cause directive. The request for a hearing must be in writing and signed by the chief executive officer of the institution. Upon receipt of the request for a hearing, the Council will notify the institution of the procedures to follow to prepare for the hearing, including the dates by which the institution must submit its response to the findings of the denial action or show-cause directive.
- (b) The institution shall have the right to respond with evidence and facts concerning the areas of noncompliance with which it has been charged, to raise all reasonable questions, and to present evidence in opposition to or extenuation of the charges of noncompliance. Such written evidence must be submitted by the date prescribed by the Council unless the institution can show that such information was not available before the submission date and that failure to make a timely submission was outside of the institution's control.
- (c) At the hearing, the institution may present only evidence not already considered. The institution may send one or more representatives, including legal or financial counsel, to present its argument in opposition to or extenuation

of the Council action. The Council transcribes all such hearings for its records. A copy of the transcript is available to the institution upon request.

2-3-501. *Hearing Format.* Hearings before the Council resulting from a denial motion or a show-cause directive and involving areas of noncompliance other than or in addition to financial concerns will take place before a panel of commissioners.

A hearing panel will consist of at least three commissioners designated by the chair of the appropriate commission of the Council to hear the presentation of the institution. The panel will present its findings and its recommended action to the full Council, which will make the final decision.

2-3-502. *Financial Hearings.* All hearings before the Council for financial concerns only will be heard by a panel of at least three commissioners, which will include at least one representative of the Financial Review Committee. The panel will present its findings and its recommended action to the full Council, which will make the final decision.

2-3-600–REVIEW BOARD APPEAL PROCESS

For those institutions that appeal to the Review Board a denial action as described in Sections 2-3-301 and 2-3-304 or a suspension action as described in Sections 2-3-402 and 2-3-404, the Council has established procedures designed to provide due process.

2-3-601. *Purpose and Authority of Review Board.* The Review Board is a separate, independent appeals body established by the Council for the purpose of hearing appeals by institutions for actions specified in Sections 2-3-301, 2-3-304, and 2-3-402.

2-3-602. *Appointment of Members.* The Review Board shall consist of fifteen (15) persons, all of whom have had experience in accreditation, who are appointed to three-year terms. A person

appointed shall not have been a commissioner within one year prior to appointment.

A Review Board panel of three to five persons, depending on the scope and complexity of the matter or institution being reviewed, will be designated by the Council from the entire Review Board to hear an appeal from an institution. The Council also will designate one member of the Review Board panel to serve as chair.

2-3-603. *Jurisdiction and Authority.* The Review Board is empowered to review, upon notice of appeal timely filed, actions specified in Sections 2-3-301, 2-3-304, and 2-3-402. The Review Board has the authority to:

- (a) affirm the decision of the Council; or
- (b) remand the case to the Council with recommendations for further consideration. It may remand the case if it finds the decision was:
 - (i) arbitrary, capricious, or otherwise in substantial disregard of the *Accreditation Criteria*, or
 - (ii) not supported by substantial evidence in the record on which the Council took the negative action.

The panel cannot reverse the decision of the Council or remand the decision based on argument by the appellant that the Council action was disproportionate to the violations cited. The Review Board is further limited in that it has no jurisdiction or authority concerning the reasonableness of the *Accreditation Criteria*.

Review Board panels will not consider any evidence that was not in the record before the Council. Documents reviewed by or available to evaluation teams are not considered to be part of the record unless they are appended to the team report or the institution submits them to the Council as part of the institution's response to the evaluation team report.

The panel acts on behalf of the entire Review Board. Therefore, a decision of a Review Board panel is final and will not be considered further by the full Review Board. In cases remanded to the Council for reconsideration, any recommendations of the Review Board panel, except the directive to reconsider, shall not bind or limit the Council in any way.

2-3-604. *Request for Appeal.* To exercise its right of appeal, the institution must file a request for a hearing before the Review Board within a time frame determined by the Council, normally not more than 10 days from date of receipt of notification of the denial or suspension action. The request for a hearing must be in writing and signed by the chief executive officer of the institution. Upon receipt of the request for a hearing, the Council will notify the institution of procedures to follow in preparing for it.

2-3-605. *Hearing of Appeal.* The hearing will be held at a time and place designated by the chair of the Review Board panel. Three members will constitute a quorum.

If the appealing institution intends to submit a written appeals brief or statement of points, it must be received by the Review Board panel and the Council at least 15 business days prior to the hearing date. The Council's reply brief must be received by the panel and the appealing institution at least seven business days prior to the hearing. The Review Board panel chair will preside at the hearing and will rule on all procedural matters. There will be no right to cross-examine the opposing party or its representatives.

The Council transcribes all Review Board hearings for its own records. A copy of the transcript is available to the institution upon request.

The hearing shall be as informal as may be reasonable and appropriate under the circumstances. Both the Council and the institution may appear by or with counsel or other representative. The institution may waive a personal appearance, in which case the matter will be handled solely on briefs.

The chair of the Review Board panel may promulgate such additional rules of procedure for the scheduling and conduct of hearings as are consistent with these procedures.

2-3-606. *Decision of the Review Board.* Every decision must have the concurrence of the majority of the Review Board panel. Within a reasonable time after the conclusion of the hearing, the hearing panel shall issue in writing its decision with a statement of its reasons and recommendation, if any, to the Council. The decision will indicate those members of the Review Board panel who concur with the decision. Dissenting opinions may be filed. The majority decision with dissenting opinions, if any, will be furnished to the institution.

2-3-607. *Council Receipt of Review Board Decisions.* Decisions by the Review Board panel are transmitted to the Council for disposition and publication.

If the Review Board panel affirms the prior decision of the Council, there is no further remedy available within these procedures. The Council's decision is final, and immediate publication is automatic. If the Review Board panel remands the matter, the case shall be deemed to be finally disposed of when the Council takes final action on remand.

2-3-608. *Expenses of Appeal Hearing.* The institution shall bear the following expenses in connection with the appeal:

- (a) travel and subsistence of the Review Board panel members participating in the hearing; and
- (b) cost of the hearing room and transcription.

An appeals deposit must be made with the Council at the time of the filing of the notice of appeal described in Section 2-3-604. This deposit shall be applied to the expenses listed above, and any excess deposit will be returned to the institution.

2-3-700–COMPLAINTS AND ADVERSE INFORMATION

Procedurally apart from Council actions heretofore described and explained, ACICS receives and is obligated to investigate legitimate complaints about an institution from any source. that in any way pertain to ACICS criteria.

Also, ACICS periodically receives and may investigate information from federal or state agencies or other accrediting agencies, or through public media sources, which may indicate possible criteria violations. Adverse information may include, but is not limited to, low completion rates, low placement rates, high default rates, tuition refund problems, negative audits or program reviews, and governmental agency investigations.

When the staff of ACICS, with delegated authority to do so, determines that a complaint or adverse information warrants investigation, it will notify the chief executive officer of the institution in writing about the complaint or adverse information, and a copy of the information will be provided. The institution is requested to submit to the Council office its version of the conditions or circumstances which led to the complaint or adverse information. The complainant also will be informed in writing that the institution has been contacted and has been requested to provide information. Any governmental agency providing adverse information to the Council may be informed at the discretion of the Council of the action taken on the adverse information.

The role of the Council in resolving complaints and investigating adverse information is to determine whether the institution is out of compliance with one or more accrediting standards to which the complaint is addressed or to which the adverse information applies. After such determination, ACICS may then do one of the following:

- (a) dismiss the complaint or terminate further investigation of the adverse information;

- (b) postpone a final action on the complaint or adverse information if there is evidence that the institution is making progress to rectify the situation or if more investigation is necessary; or
- (c) notify the institution that, on the basis of information available, ACICS has determined that the institution is failing to comply with the *Accreditation Criteria* and that the institution is:
 - (i) directed to show cause why its accreditation should not be suspended, revoked, or otherwise conditioned;
 - (ii) directed to submit a report to ACICS detailing plans for rectifying the area(s) of noncompliance; or
 - (iii) directed to undergo a special on-site evaluation.

The Council will inform the complainant of the determination by the Council and the disposition of the complaint.

2-3-800–PROBATION

Probation is a status that the Council may impose on an institution if the institution is unable to demonstrate that it consistently operates in accordance with the *Accreditation Criteria*.

2-3-801. Imposition. Probation may be imposed by the Council either when it continues a show-cause directive after at least one hearing either in person or in writing, or after an institution has notified the Council that it intends to appeal a denial action.

2-3-802. Result of Probation. The Council will not accept any applications for new programs or new campuses from any institution on probation unless the institution receives approval in advance to submit such an application.

2-3-803. *Probation Lifted.* Probation does not expire automatically. Instead, the institution is obligated to demonstrate to the Council that the conditions or circumstances which initially led to the imposition of probation have been corrected before probation will be lifted. Probation may be continued even if the show-cause directive has been vacated. The Council may order a special visit at the institution's expense before lifting probation.

2-3-804. *Notification of Probation.* The Council will notify the U.S. Secretary of Education, appropriate state regulatory agencies, other appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public of its decision to place an institution on probation. The institution is required to notify immediately in writing its current and prospective students that it has been placed on probation by its accrediting agency.

2-3-900—SPECIAL AND FACT VISITS

The Council reserves the right to initiate special on-site evaluation visits to or request specific reports from an institution at any time, both of which are to be completed under conditions and within a time frame determined by ACICS. Refusal of an institution to respond to or cooperate with such requests shall be grounds for suspension of its grant of accreditation.

At any time ACICS has substantive evidence or information that an institution is in jeopardy of having its eligibility status with a federal or state agency or its accreditation status with another accrediting agency conditioned, ACICS may direct a special on-site evaluation visit to that institution. The purpose of the visit will be to ensure that the students in the institution are not being harmed educationally because of the institution's alleged noncompliance with federal or state statutes or regulations or another accrediting agency's standards and criteria.

The Council also may direct a Fast Assessment and Compliance Team (FACT) visit to investigate and report on alleged improper practices at ACICS institutions.

The Council retains discretion to determine the size and composition of special and FACT teams and the length and breadth of the evaluation. In making these decisions, the Council will consider the issues and factors that prompted the visit, the size of the institution, and the nature of the institution's offerings.

2-3-1000—DEBARMENT

The Council may bar a person, including spouses and closely related family groups as defined in Section 2-2-401, from being an owner or senior manager of an ACICS-accredited institution if that person was an owner or manager of an institution that lost its accreditation as a result of a denial or suspension action or that closed without providing a teach-out or refunds to students matriculating at the time of closure.

The Council will notify a person or persons whom it intends to bar as the result of denial or suspension action within four months following the loss of the institution's accreditation. It will notify a person or persons whom it intends to bar as the result of the closing of an institution within a reasonable period of time following the closure, normally not more than six months following the closure of the institution. In each case, the Council will forward an intent to bar notice by both express and first-class mail to the last institutional mailing address known to the Council, unless the Council has received updated mailing information following the institution's closure or loss of accreditation. Those individuals will be considered notified when the Council has forwarded the intent to bar notice in accordance with these procedures.

The intent to bar notice will inform the person(s) that they are entitled to present information and materials in writing or in person to challenge the intent to bar at the next scheduled meeting of the Council. The notice will stipulate that if they intend to challenge the intent to bar, the person(s) must inform the Council office in writing within ten days of receipt of the notice as to whether they desire a personal appearance

before the Council, or whether they will challenge the intent to bar in writing. A debarment order may be issued by the Council as a result of its consideration of the facts presented. Notice of the Council's decision will be sent to the individual(s) by first class and certified mail within ten days following their challenge before the Council.

The Council retains final discretion to establish the terms and length of the debarment. The length of debarment will vary depending on the circumstances that led to the debarment decision, but it typically will be for a period of at least one year and not more than three years. Individual circumstances may justify a longer period of debarment.

A person or persons barred by the Council may appeal this decision to the Council in accordance with such debarment appeals procedures as the Council may establish. The Council's decision is final if the person elects not to appeal or if the Council affirms its decision following appeal, and no additional appeal rights are available under these procedures.

After considering an individual's challenge to the intent to bar or when no challenge is presented, the Council's decision to bar an individual is final. No appeal rights are available under these procedures.

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TITLE III EVALUATION STANDARDS

Chapter 1 GENERAL STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO ALL INSTITUTIONS

INTRODUCTION

This section of the *Accreditation Criteria* comprises the most heavily weighted part of the accrediting process. Chapter 1 states and explains the minimum operational and educational practices expected of all institutions, whatever methodology and mode of educational delivery is used and wherever the institution provides educational activities. Inasmuch as these are minimum expectations, extreme deviation from them is not permitted. The Council, while encouraging innovation at institutions and attempting to be somewhat flexible in its interpretation of these standards, does not grant waivers on criteria pertaining to good educational practice.

Chapters 2-6 contain additional criteria which are applicable to institutions offering nondegree programs and programs culminating in occupational associate's, academic associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees. The Council recognizes that some requirements of these standards may not be appropriate for entities, and it may waive specific standards on a case-by-case basis.

3-1-100–MISSION: PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Every institution must have a mission which is its specific purpose for existing. This mission, together with a set of objectives to accomplish it, must be summarized in a mission statement. The objectives should be devoted substantially to career-related education and should be reasonable

for the program of instruction, mode of delivery, and facilities of the institution.

Institutions may exhibit a variety of missions, ranging from those which have a singleness of purpose to those which are multi-purpose.

3-1-101. *Disclosure.* The mission statement of the institution, its purpose, and its supporting objectives must be stated in the catalog and in other publications readily available to the public. The mission statement must be expressed in terms readily understandable by a prospective student, parents, the public, and other educational institutions.

3-1-102. *Implementation.* The institution is measured both in terms of its stated purpose and in terms of its conscientious endeavor to fulfill this purpose. The faculty, financial resources, physical plant, administration, management, and educational activities shall be appropriate and committed to successful implementation of the stated mission of the institution.

3-1-110–INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

An important indication of the overall effectiveness of an ACICS-accredited institution is the degree to which it meets its own predetermined educational outcomes. Each ACICS-accredited institution, consistent with its mission, shall develop and implement an Institutional Effectiveness Plan that identifies how it plans to assess and continuously improve its educational programs and processes, and that addresses its ability to meet the educational and occupational

objectives of its programs. In this document, each institution should attempt to incorporate short-term objectives to be accomplished in order to achieve the mission of the institution and its future goals.

3-1-111. Institutional Effectiveness Plan. Each campus shall have on file an Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP). A main and its branches may share aspects of an IEP, such as the mission, but each main and branch campus is expected to have its own plan for effectiveness that describes the characteristics of the programs offered and of the student population, describes what types of data will be used for assessment, identifies outcomes, and states how continuous improvement will be made to improve or enhance outcomes at the institution. At a minimum, the following five elements will be evaluated for institutional effectiveness:

- (a) student retention rates;
- (b) student placement rates;
- (c) level of graduate satisfaction;
- (d) level of employer satisfaction; and
- (e) student learning outcomes.

In compiling the data needed to assess the five elements, each institution shall identify and describe how the data were collected, the rationale for using each type of data, a summary and analysis of the data collected, and an explanation of how the data have been used to improve educational processes. Baseline data must be identified for each of the five elements.

For example, the data needed to demonstrate student learning outcomes includes baseline data and data to support that student learning has occurred. Examples of data may include, but are not limited to, course grades, GPA, CGPA, pre- and post-tests, entrance assessments, portfolios, standardized tests, professional licensure examinations, and other measures of skill and competency attainment. Placement data should not be used exclusively to validate student learning outcomes.

Each institution shall publish annual placement and retention goals. In formulating these goals, each institution shall take into account the retention and placement rates from the previous three Annual Institutional Reports and the specific activities that will be undertaken to meet those goals. The activities must demonstrate the institution's ability to maintain or improve retention and placement outcomes each year.

Institutions are encouraged to include additional information in their plans which is relevant to improving their overall effectiveness.

3-1-112. Implementation and Monitoring of the Institutional Effectiveness Plan. Institutions shall document that the specific activities listed in the plan are carried out and that periodic progress reports are completed to ensure that the plan's activities are implemented. Appropriate individuals should be assigned responsibility for implementing and monitoring the Institutional Effectiveness Plan.

3-1-113. Evaluation of the Institutional Effectiveness Plan. Institutions shall evaluate the plan, its goals, and activities at least annually. Evaluation requires the determination of initial baseline rates and a measurement of results after planned activities have occurred. Institutions shall maintain documentation of historical outcomes and show evidence of how this documentation is used to achieve expected goals. Institutions should adjust their goals accordingly as a result of an evaluation of the Institutional Effectiveness Plan.

3-1-200—ORGANIZATION

Each institution should have an organizational structure designed to promote among all staff and faculty a spirit of understanding, cooperation, and responsibility. Performance standards and monitoring controls need to be employed to insure adequate administrative functioning. The annual budget expenditures should be adequate to properly carry out the stated educational objectives of the institution.

3-1-201. *Disclosure.* The governance, control, and corporate organization of the institution shall be stated in appropriate publications, including the catalog, together with the names of the trustees, directors, administrators, and officers.

3-1-202. *Integrity.* The integrity of an institution is manifested by the professional competence, experience, personal responsibility, and ethical practices demonstrated by all individuals comprising the ownership, control, or management.

An institution must assume full responsibility for the actions, statements, and conduct of its representatives and must, therefore, select each of them with the utmost care, provide them with adequate training, and arrange for constant and proper supervision and evaluation of their work. The Council considers the following to be important:

(a) Emphasis shall be placed upon the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall administration of the institution. Attention shall be given to educational activities, admissions, student financial aid, financial operations, plant and equipment, student services, and compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws. The degree of institutional compliance with the criteria in these areas is a measure of the administrative capability of the chief on-site executive officer.

(b) The institution must maintain written evidence that faculty and staff members clearly understand their duties and responsibilities, know the person to whom they report, and understand the standards by which the success of their work is measured. A copy of the document describing these terms and conditions shall be given to the faculty and staff member and a copy maintained by the institution. The administration must maintain documentation of the evaluation of the faculty and staff.

(c) In the administrative organization of the institution, the professional integrity of the faculty and staff shall be respected. Administrative decisions shall not inhibit the academic freedom of the faculty. The institution shall adopt a policy assuring academic freedom and communicate the policy to all faculty.

(d) An institution shall establish, publish, and implement appropriate grievance policies and procedures for considering complaints received from students, employees, and other interested parties. The grievance procedure for students shall be published in the institutional catalog or student handbook and shall include the name and address of ACICS.

3-1-203. *Financial Stability.* The financial well-being of an institution requires constant oversight by competent managers.

The institution shall have adequate revenues and assets to meet its responsibilities, to ensure continuity of service, and to accomplish its mission. Budgetary practices should reflect a balanced application of resources to operations; the amount of expenses and debt must not burden the educational objectives of the institution; the proportion of the budget allocated to instructional programs must be adequate; and the financial profile of the institution must support the intent of its objectives.

3-1-300—ADMINISTRATION

Each institution must coordinate its administrative functions to best serve its educational mission. All staff should be well trained to carry out administrative functions. Detailed recordkeeping enhances the management of the institution.

3-1-301. *Management.* Each institution shall have a chief executive officer. Moreover, each institution also shall have a qualified on-site administrator at the main campus and at all branches. This person must be made known to ACICS and shall be responsible for the

implementation of the stated mission as determined by the institution's governing body. The staff continuously shall evaluate the programs of study, student activity program, guidance services, financial aid services, instructional procedures and resources, and other aspects of the educational program of the institution. The chief executive officer shall seek to improve the educational program as a result of such evaluation. A current copy of the *Accreditation Criteria* shall be maintained by each main and branch location and shall be available to faculty and staff.

3-1-302. *Evidence of Degrees.* Institutions listing degrees of staff members in the catalog shall have on file appropriate evidence of the degrees. Copies of either transcripts or diplomas are acceptable.

3-1-303. *Records.* Careful recordkeeping is crucial to the smooth day-to-day operation of an institution. The data from these records are important to the institution for future planning, to students for informational purposes, and to evaluation teams during school visits. All such records should be maintained at each institutional site or shall be available at each site during evaluation visits. The Council expects at least the following:

- (a) Adequate records shall be kept by each institution relative to administrative operations. These include financial aid activities, admissions, curriculum, accreditation and licensure, guidance, instructional resources, supplies and equipment, school plant, faculty and staff, student activities, and student personnel.
- (b) For all students admitted under an ability-to-benefit determination, the institution shall maintain records of the validated test scores, initial and periodic academic and career advising, and any other factors used by the institution to support its admissions determination.
- (c) For institutions admitting students under an ability-to-benefit determination, documentation shall be maintained to

evidence the relationship between test cut-off scores on whatever test the institution uses and successful academic or employment outcomes.

Such records could include such data as admissions rate (acceptances versus rejections), completion rate of those enrolled, general placement rate, or specific career placement rate.

For students tested and enrolled based on a test's validity to predict aptitude, the test score should predict successful completion of the program. Institutions must develop longitudinal data comparing the test cut-off score(s) utilized for acceptance with the eventual success of students.

An institution admitting a high percentage of applicants based on testing and losing a comparably high percentage of those students before completion (even allowing for factors other than ability) may not be using the appropriate test to measure aptitude, or the cut-off score for admission is too low, or both. The use of the minimum cut-off scores determined by the U.S. Department of Education will not, in and of itself, satisfy the requirements of this section.

- (d) For high school graduates or those with high school equivalency, the institution shall have on file evidence that the student has received a high school diploma or its equivalent. A signed statement by the student is acceptable documentation. The student's record also may include personal background information, evidence of other educational experiences (including certificates, diplomas, or degrees earned), or information about the ability of the student to benefit from the education offered, including any aptitude testing information or recommendations from other sources.

- (e) A permanent academic record (transcript) of the student's progress shall be maintained. Compatible with the institution's mission, the transcript shall indicate student accomplishment in terms of clock hours, units of credit, or some other recognized system. The grading system used shall be fully explained on the transcript and must be consistent with that appearing in the institutional catalog.
- (f) All basic records and reports pertaining to students shall be safely protected. Acceptable methods of protecting records from theft, fire, water damage, or other possible loss include appropriately fire-rated file cabinets (that can be and are locked when not being used); a central location such as a vault, the entirety of which is protected; and microfilmed records, computer disk, backup tape, printout records, or other hard copies of records protectively stored off the premises.
- (g) Certain basic records shall be maintained by the institution for a specified period of time. Transcripts should be kept indefinitely, and admissions data and other records should be kept for at least five years from the last day of attendance. Financial aid records shall be maintained according to the guidelines established by the funding source.

3-1-400-RELATIONS WITH STUDENTS

Each institution should strive to ensure that its relations with students always reflect the highest ethical standards and conform to all applicable laws and regulations. Each institution also is required to develop a program of student services that is consistent with its stated mission, including services provided for students attending branch campuses and learning sites. Such services should support the educational program and reflect the institution's concern for the welfare of the student.

3-1-410-ADMISSIONS AND

RECRUITMENT

It is up to an institution to establish its own admissions criteria. It is the responsibility of ACICS to ensure that all who are enrolled are accorded equal educational opportunity.

The ultimate responsibility for the activities of an institution's employees, vendors, contractors, or agents in the referral, recruiting, evaluation, and admissions processes always remains with the institution. An institution may not delegate without supervision these activities to anyone whose economic incentives are to recruit prospects through means that are unethical or subject to public criticism or to admit ill-prepared applicants. The institution may not contract, directly or indirectly, with third parties who are generally unfamiliar with the institution. "Non-employees" are independent contractors who are not considered "employees" under the Internal Revenue Code.

Institutions participating in Title IV programs must be aware of regulations imposed by the U.S. Department of Education as they apply to recruiting practices.

3-1-411. Admissions. The admissions policy shall conform to the institution's mission, shall be publicly stated, and shall be administered as written. The following minimums apply:

- (a) The requirements for students admitted to programs leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree shall include graduation from high school or its equivalent, or demonstration of the ability to benefit from the training offered. Such ability-to-benefit determination shall include, at a minimum, the administration of a test approved by the U.S. Department of Education and academic and career advising.
- (b) It is the responsibility of the institution to maintain student records which reflect the requirements for admission of all students.

- (c) Institutions are not precluded from admitting, under different requirements, students who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance or who may be otherwise specially circumstanced, such as:
- (i) having financial sponsorship through contractual arrangements with public or private organizations;
 - (ii) having identifiable needs requiring remedial instruction as a supplement to the regular curriculums;
 - (iii) participating in innovative postsecondary programs specially described to ACICS; or
 - (iv) being enrolled in individual courses not leading to an academic credential.

3-1-412. *Recruitment.* Recruiting shall be ethical and compatible with the educational objectives of the institution. The allocation of an institution's financial resources for purposes of recruitment shall be consistent with the stated mission of the institution. The following minimums apply:

- (a) An institution shall ensure that any person or entity engaged in admissions or recruitment activities on its behalf is communicating current and accurate information regarding courses and programs, services, tuition, terms, and operating policies.
- (b) No prospective student names obtained as a result of a survey, canvass, promise of future employment or income while a student, or other marketing activity by an institution may be used for recruitment purposes unless the name of that institution is clearly identified and purposes of such activity are communicated to the respondent. This does not preclude the use of surveys or other studies to determine the

employment needs and the educational desires of the local community.

- (c) An institution shall conform to the laws and regulations of each of the states in which it operates and shall ensure that each of its representatives is properly licensed or registered as required by the laws of that state.
- (d) Representatives of an institution shall use only those titles which accurately reflect their actual duties and responsibilities. Recruitment and enrollment personnel may not be designated as counselors or advisors and may not make final decisions regarding financial aid eligibility, packaging, awarding, and disbursement.
- (e) Referrals are permitted, and the referrer may be paid a fee so long as the referrer provides full disclosure and does not misrepresent the purposes of soliciting a prospective referral and such payments do not violate state or federal laws.
- (f) All recruiters must be supervised by the institution's administration to ensure that their activities are in compliance with all applicable standards.

3-1-413. *Transfer of Credit.* An institution shall evaluate and consider awarding proper academic credit for credits earned at institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the United States Department of Education. The institution shall establish and adhere to a systematic method for evaluating and awarding academic credit for those courses that satisfy current program course requirements. Written policies and procedures must clearly outline the process by which transfer of academic credit is awarded.

3-1-420—STANDARDS OF SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

Each institution shall establish and administer measures of satisfactory academic progress for all students as referenced in Appendix D.

3-1-421. *Compliance.* The institution complies with the requirements of Appendix D.

3-1-422. *Documenting Compliance.* The institution documents compliance with its Satisfactory Academic Progress policy.

3-1-423. *Oversight.* The institution encourages and assists students who are experiencing difficulty in progressing satisfactorily in their programs.

3-1-430–FINANCIAL RELATIONS

3-1-431. *Scholarships, Institutional Grants, Institutional Loans, and Financial Aid.* The Council recognizes that most accredited institutions offer or administer programs of financial assistance to students. Institutions must meet appropriate guidelines for such programs in order to ensure their legitimacy. Participation in ethical institutional grant (See Appendix E, "Guidelines for Institutional Grant Programs"), institutional loan, and scholarship programs requires adherence to the following:

- (a) The application of these programs must fall within the publicly accepted meaning of the terms "scholarship," "grant," and "loan."
- (b) Institutional scholarship and grant program information must be printed in the current catalog of the institution with full disclosure of the terms, conditions, application procedures, deadline dates, basis for selection, and range of award amounts. This information must be presented in such a manner that avoids leaving any false, misleading, or exaggerated impressions of the scholarship(s) or grants(s) offered. Institutions are reminded that the primary basis for awarding a scholarship is the student's performance (or potential performance) in an educational program. Institutional grants are awarded primarily on financial need (see Glossary definitions for additional information).

- (c) The availability of institutional loans, terms, and conditions must be disclosed in the current catalog. The amount of the loan will vary according to the individual financial need of each student receiving the assistance. The collection of institutional loans must be pursued in an aggressive and systematic manner, based on sound business practices, for all student borrowers.

- (d) Financial aid (grants, loans, and work-study programs supported by outside sources such as private organizations or state and federal governments and supervised by an institution) may be offered so long as the aid is administered within the guidelines established by the funding source. It is the responsibility of the institution to make clear in all of its publications and by all of its actions the meanings of the terms scholarship, grant, loan, and financial aid.

3-1-432. *Tuition and Charges.* Institutions may charge varying amounts of tuition and fees for different programs. All charges should be consistent for similarly circumstanced students enrolling at the same time and in the same programs, however, and detailed financial records should indicate at all times the financial obligation of the student to the institution. The following are minimum expectations:

- (a) The tuition and other charges, including the period for which the student is financially obligated, shall be clearly stated in the catalog of the institution. The existence of any separate or comparable publication containing tuition rates must be referenced specifically in the catalog. The schedule of charges must be uniformly administered to all categories of students.
- (b) The financial records of the students shall clearly show the charges and dates for the posting of tuition, fees, and other charges;

the payments and dates of payment; and the balance after each transaction.

- (c) The enrollment agreement or catalog used by an institution must clearly outline the financial obligations of both the institution and the student. When an enrollment agreement is used, the student must receive a copy.
- (d) Announcements of changes in tuition or fees must state the effective date of the change and be uniformly administered.
- (e) Terms of payment may be varied by the institution so long as the tuition charges are uniformly administered.

3-1-433. Refund Policy. The institution must have a fair and equitable refund policy that is applicable to all students and that is published in the institution's catalog. Specific federal or state policies may apply.

3-1-434. Administration of Student Financial Aid. Participation in state or federal student financial aid programs requires serious administrative responsibility. The Council expects all institutions participating in such programs to be knowledgeable of and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The following requirements govern how such activities are evaluated by ACICS:

- (a) An institution participating in student financial aid programs shall designate at least one competent person at the site to administer student financial aid. The extent of this activity and the personnel needed shall be governed by the size and classification of the institution. The person who determines the amount of student awards cannot be responsible for disbursing those awards.
- (b) The person or persons assigned to administer student financial aid programs must in all cases be a part of the administration. Administrative personnel involved in student recruitment as their

major activity shall not have the final decision-making authority in the approval or awarding of student financial aid.

- (c) There shall be professional awareness on the part of the financial aid administrator as shown by membership and participation in state, regional, or national financial aid associations and by other educational activities designed to keep the administrator up to date on procedures and changes in the field.

3-1-435. Cash Discounts. Any institution providing discounts for cash received in advance of the normal payment schedule must have a written policy. That policy must be provided in writing to all student applicants prior to enrollment.

The institution must demonstrate that the policy:

- (a) is available to all students at the institution; and
- (b) bases the size of the discount on the financial benefit the institution receives from the payment of cash earlier than otherwise would be required under the institution's normal tuition payment schedule or applicable retail installment contract.

3-1-440—STUDENT SERVICES

3-1-441. Counseling and Guidance. Each institution shall designate at least one person on staff experienced in counseling students on personal or academic problems and employment opportunities. The extent of such activity, and the personnel assigned to it, shall be determined by the size, classification, and admissions standards of the institution, the characteristics and location of students, and the means of communication with them. Orientation activities shall assist new students in adapting to the institution. The following are minimum expectations:

- (a) A system of educational, occupational, and personal advising shall be available

to students and shall be provided on a periodic basis to ability-to-benefit students enrolled pursuant to Section 3-1-303(b).

- (b) Institutions shall emphasize retention and program completion for all students through activities that take into account their academic and socioeconomic characteristics.
- (c) Institutions shall provide employment assistance and document activity. An institution shall not guarantee employment or the starting salary of its graduates. Follow-up studies on graduates and employer satisfaction shall be conducted by all institutions at specific measuring points following placement of the graduate. All institutions that use placement percentages or salary projections as part of their recruiting activities shall maintain data on all graduates, including the percentage receiving jobs and the percentage receiving jobs in the career field for which they were trained. Institutions also should keep data on students who do not graduate but who become employed on their own or with the institution's assistance.

An institution is encouraged to provide placement assistance, when requested, to graduates of other ACICS-accredited institutions who are relocating to a new community.

- (d) Institutions shall document that students are counseled concerning their student loan repayment obligations.

3-1-442. *Extracurricular Activities.* Institutions which sponsor or conduct programs of extracurricular activities shall base such programs on well-defined purposes. These programs shall be designed primarily to serve the educational needs of the students, and the institution shall provide guidance and supervision for them.

3-1-500—EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The major index of an institution's quality is the effectiveness of its educational program. The educational program must be consistent with the stated mission, be adequate in breadth and context to achieve it, and produce measurable results. Its educational activities, whether residential or otherwise and whether group or individually oriented, shall include definable instruction, interaction, and evaluation.

Another index of an institution's quality is the competence of its faculty. The effectiveness of any institution depends upon contemporary teaching strategies and practices and upon the knowledge, ability, and commitment of its faculty. The selection, orientation, guidance, stimulation, and evaluation of the teaching staff is one of the most significant responsibilities of the administration. The faculty should actively participate in developing the total educational program of the institution. A third index of institutional quality is the resources available to instructors and students.

For institutions offering programs in which state certification, licensing, or registration is mandatory in order to become employed in a specific career field, curriculums must contain the necessary course work to afford students the opportunity to obtain the minimum skills and competencies in order to become certified, licensed, or registered in that career field.

3-1-510—PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION, PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND EVALUATION

3-1-511. *Program Administration.* The administration of the academic programs shall be assigned to individuals whose academic or experiential qualifications are related to the programs of study. The amount of time devoted to the administration of the program(s) must be commensurate with the size and scope of the institution and its program offerings.

3-1-512. *Program Planning.* Educational activities shall be consistent with the institution's

mission and objectives. The credibility and integrity of an institution shall be reflected by the manner in which its mission and objectives correlate with the educational opportunities made available to students.

The Council recognizes the legitimacy of various modes of educational delivery. An institution using various modes of delivery should demonstrate overall effectiveness and quality consistent with the criteria (See Glossary definitions for distance learning, independent study, and self-paced instruction; see also Appendix H, Principles and Guidelines for Nontraditional Education). The following standards apply:

- (a) The formation of policies and design of educational programs should involve students, graduates, administrators, faculty, and other interested parties such as advisory committees. This practice also should serve as an evaluation process to determine effectiveness and relevance when the institution relies upon curricula, courses, courseware, or coursework that is designed, leased, or owned by another entity or provided by or through a network of entities.
- (b) Flexibility in organization and administration shall be provided to serve varying groups and situations. Provisions shall be made for individual differences among students in the learning applications, learning environments, and modes of instructional delivery available to students.
- (c) Resources of the community shall be utilized to enrich the program.

3-1-513. Program Development. The educational programs shall evidence a well-organized sequence of appropriate subjects leading to an occupational objective, an academic credential, or both. The following apply:

- (a) The curricula shall be published in the institution's catalog and shall state

objectives specific to each curriculum. Additionally, there shall be a detailed syllabus on file for each course in each curriculum that is made available to each student enrolled in the class. For independent study courses, institutions are required to develop a learning contract that outlines the course objectives and procedures unique to this form of instruction. For practica, externships, and internships, institutions are required to develop a written and mutually signed agreement that outlines the arrangement between the institution and the practicum site, including specific learning objectives, course requirements, and evaluation criteria. The Council's expectations for detailed syllabi, independent study, practica, externships, and internships are outlined in the Glossary.

- (b) The courses offered shall be available when needed by the student in the normal pursuit of a program of study. Prerequisites must be indicated. The prerequisite system must assure proper qualifications of students in any given class and provide an increasing level of difficulty as the student progresses.

Institutions may record student progress in clock hours or credit hours as defined in the Glossary. When appropriate, special consideration should be given to remediation and English as a Second Language programs. (For additional information, see Appendix F, Guidelines for English as a Second Language).

3-1-514. Program Evaluation. The faculty shall participate in a systematic process of continuous curriculum evaluation and revision. Institutions are encouraged to consider curriculum changes designed to serve students' needs that may be determined by community surveys or other fact-finding procedures relating to educational or employer needs.

3-1-515. Course and Program Measurement.

The Council recognizes that institutions must provide for their students a learning environment in which achievement is encouraged. It further recognizes the legitimacy of both traditional (e.g., lecture/laboratory/practicum) and nontraditional (e.g., distance education or independent study) educational delivery methods. A framework for transfer of credit and consistent application of academic credit awards should apply to all of these varied forms of educational delivery.

Institutions, therefore, must demonstrate a knowledge of appropriate academic course and program measurement and correct application of the measurement.

(a) Credit in traditionally delivered programs measured in credit hours must be calculated based on one of the following attribution formulas:

(i) One quarter credit hour equals, at a minimum, 10 classroom hours of lecture, 20 hours of laboratory, and 30 hours of practicum. The formula for calculating the number of quarter credit hours for each course is:

$$(\text{hours of lecture}/10) + (\text{hours of lab}/20) + (\text{hours of practicum}/30); \text{ or}$$

(ii) One semester credit hour equals, at a minimum, 15 classroom hours of lecture, 30 hours of laboratory, and 45 hours of practicum. The formula for calculating the number of semester credit hours for each course is:

$$(\text{hours of lecture}/15) + (\text{hours of lab}/30) + (\text{hours of practicum}/45).$$

Many courses are a combination of lecture, lab, and practicum. Therefore, the institution should be very careful in allocating the number of hours of each in a particular course.

The definition of a "clock (contact) hour" states that the minimum instructional time is 50 minutes of supervised or directed instruction and appropriate break(s). Therefore, when calculating conversions from clock to credit hours or allocating credit for courses, institutions must take great care to ensure that scheduled breaks are educationally appropriate. Long periods of instruction with unusually short or no breaks are not acceptable. The institution has the burden of convincing the Council that the breaks are sufficiently long and frequent for the program being taught. Thus, it is rare for an institution to be able to divide by 50 in calculating the credit-hour equivalent of contact hours; usually, the denominator should be 60 or something between 50 and 60.

(b) Credit award rationales for nontraditional delivery of courses or programs (e.g., distance education or independent study) generally do not use the above lecture/laboratory/practicum formulas for credit calculation. The rationale used must be submitted to the Council for pre-approval of the credit calculation. As a part of the approval application, an institution must demonstrate that the clock or credit hours awarded are appropriate for the degrees and credentials offered using a thoroughly developed rationale. The institution may accomplish this by demonstrating that students completing these programs or courses have acquired equivalent levels of knowledge, skills, or competencies to those acquired in traditional formats.

Courses offered in nontraditional formats must be structured to ensure that students have sufficient opportunity for preparation, reflection, and analysis concerning learned subject matter. Institutions should be aware that federal law requires a minimum number of weeks per academic year for Title IV eligibility purposes. The U.S. Department of Education uses eligibility criteria and definitions for Title IV disbursements

that may be different from these in the *Accreditation Criteria*.

- (c) Institutions may award academic credit to students who demonstrate competency in a subject area based on their academic, occupational, or personal experiences. The following expectations apply:

- (i) Institutions shall establish and adhere to a systematic method for evaluating and awarding academic credit for those experiences (e.g., experiential learning, advanced academic standing, credit by examination) that satisfy current program course requirements.
- (ii) Institutions must maintain documentation to support that credit hours awarded are appropriate based on the assessment of the knowledge, skills, or competencies acquired.

3-1-516. *Course Scheduling.* Courses must be scheduled in such a way as to be educationally appropriate for the academic background of the students served, the type of the coursework involved, and the method of educational delivery. The Council will review the number of minutes of instruction provided, the appropriateness of the length of the breaks between classes, the number of classroom hours per week, the expectation of outside preparation, and the educational needs of the students.

3-1-520—CREDENTIALS CONFERRED

3-1-521. *Conferring of Credentials.* The conferring of certificates, diplomas, or degrees by an institution shall be consistent with its mission and objectives and in compliance with applicable state laws.

3-1-530—INSTRUCTION

3-1-531. *Instructional Tools.* Institutions shall:

- (a) provide appropriate facilities, instructional equipment, resources, support for modes of instructional delivery, and personnel;
- (b) ensure academic freedom and other conditions favorable for effective classroom instruction;
- (c) ensure that the quantity and type of instructional material and equipment is proportionate to the size of the institution and the nature of the program; and
- (d) comply with applicable copyright laws in the use of instructional materials.

3-1-532. *Instructional Components.* Required instructional components shall include:

- (a) systematic planning;
- (b) well-defined instructional objectives;
- (c) the selection and use of appropriate learning materials;
- (d) appropriate modes of instructional delivery;
- (e) the use of appropriate assessment strategies; and
- (f) the use of appropriate experiences.

3-1-540—FACULTY

3-1-541. *Faculty Preparation.* Preparation of faculty members shall be academically and experientially appropriate to the subject matter they teach. Faculty members shall be competent to teach the subject matter offered and shall have reasonable latitude in their choice of teaching methods. The institution must provide evidence that all faculty members are graduates of institutions accredited by agencies recognized by the United States Department of Education. Faculty who are graduates from institutions outside the United States must be graduates of

institutions recognized by their government and their transcript must be translated into English and be evaluated by a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) to determine the equivalency of the degree to degrees awarded by institutions in the United States.

3-1-542. *Verification of Credentials.* Institutions must maintain evidence of the credentials that qualify faculty members to teach their assigned courses. Official transcripts for all academic credentials held by all faculty members shall be on file in the administrative offices at the campus location nearest to where the faculty member is primarily employed. An official transcript is one sent from the registrar's office at the institution where study was completed directly to an employing institution. A transcript bearing the notation "issued to student" is not an official transcript for employment purposes.

3-1-543. *Faculty Development.* Institutions are required to establish faculty development plans including in-service and/or professional growth activities to enhance faculty expertise. There shall be documented evidence on an annual basis of these development plans and their implementation. For those faculty who are trained in teaching methodology on the postsecondary level and who possess limited related outside employment, the plan should concentrate on content update, e.g., new software, equipment, techniques, etc. For those faculty who are practitioners trained in content rather than teaching methodology, the plan should concentrate on curriculum concepts, new theories and techniques of instruction, and new educational media. Institutions are responsible for demonstrating that these plans are appropriate given each faculty members' training, education, and related work experience and that they provide the proper mix of in-service training and/or professional growth based on the academic and experiential background of the faculty. (See Glossary for definitions of "in-service training", "professional growth", and "faculty development").

3-1-544. *Faculty Meetings.* Regularly scheduled faculty meetings or department meetings, with participation by full-time and part-time faculty, shall be held. Discussions and attendance shall be recorded.

3-1-600-EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Each institution must provide an environment that is conducive to good instruction and learning and that supports the educational programs offered by the institution. The adequacy of the environment is assessed against the demands made upon it by the curricula, faculty, and students.

3-1-601. *Plant and Equipment.* The buildings, classrooms, equipment, furniture, grounds, instructional tools, support systems, instructional facilities, machinery, and other physical requirements of the educational program shall be appropriate and shall contribute to the achievement of the institution's objectives. Equipment, instructional tools, and machinery must be properly installed and maintained.

3-1-602. *Code Requirements.* The plant shall meet the general tests of safety, usefulness, cleanliness, maintenance, health, lighting, and compliance with any local or state laws governing physical facilities, particularly with respect to fire, safety, and sanitation.

3-1-700-PUBLICATIONS

It is important for institutions to recognize the value of "truth in advertising" when promoting their operations. Publications must be prepared and presented in a professional manner to reflect favorably upon the institution. Information published must be accurate and factual and reflect the current status of the institution. Only the Council can accept or reject an institution's catalog, and a final decision will not be made based on a draft.

3-1-701. *Catalog.* Each institution shall publish and provide to each enrolled student a catalog which complies with Appendix C, "Guidelines for Institutional Publications."

3-1-702. *Multiple-School Catalog.* All institutions utilizing a common catalog must be of common ownership. Photographs of the physical facilities of any of the institutions must be captioned to identify the particular institution or campus depicted. The faculty and staff of each institution and the members of the general administration exercising supervisory responsibility for the group of institutions must be clearly identified with respect to each institution and the overall administration. Any information contained in the catalog that is not common to all institutions in the group should be presented in such a manner that no confusion, misunderstanding, or misrepresentation is possible. For further information, see Appendix C.

3-1-703. *Advertising.* Literature used by an institution must be presented in such a manner as to be factual with respect to services offered or benefits promised. An English translation for advertising that is in a language other than English must be available. For further information, see Appendix C.

If an institution publicly discloses incorrect or misleading information about its accredited status, the contents of an evaluation team report, or accreditation actions with respect to the institution, the institution must make a public disclosure of correction through the same media or means.

3-1-800—LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

The adequate provision of library resources and information services, appropriate to the academic level and scope of an institution's programs, is essential to teaching and learning. It is incumbent upon all member institutions to assess the level of library resources needed in relation to their programs and to provide a range of support to meet these needs. The size of collections and the budget allowed for library resources and services do not ensure adequacy. The quality, relevance, accessibility, availability, and provision of support services ultimately will determine the adequacy of an institution's efforts. In assessing

library resources and services, ACICS requires that an institution, at a minimum, shall:

- (a) develop an adequate base of library resources;
- (b) ensure means to access these resources;
- (c) develop a continuous assessment strategy for library resources and information services;
- (d) provide adequate staff to support library development, collection organization, and accessibility;
- (e) ensure that library services are provided to all learners, including those at nonmain campuses; and
- (f) provide training and encouragement for students and faculty to utilize library resources as an integral part of the learning process.

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TITLE III

Chapter 2 STANDARDS FOR NONDEGREE PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

In addition to the general standards in Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, the following standards apply specifically to nondegree programs.

3-2-100—FACULTY

Teaching hours, assignments, and schedules will vary from field to field and from institution to institution but should in all cases allow time for adequate preparation and professional development. The institution shall devise a plan for the efficient use of faculty competence and time, including student-teacher ratios, number of teacher preparations, and number of teaching hours. Reasonableness may be defined by, but is not restricted to, the following expectations.

3-2-101. *Teaching Load.* An instructor's teaching load, including night school, shall not exceed 32 clock hours per week, except that an overload of not more than one subject per term for additional compensation is permitted. Teaching loads may differ when using alternative methods of instruction and must be commensurate with the type of delivery method utilized. For purposes of this calculation, assigned courses offered by nontraditional or distance learning modes of instruction are deemed to consist of one clock hour per week for each unit of academic credit awarded.

3-2-102. *Field Preparation.* Assignments requiring more than three preparations in different fields (e.g., secretarial studies, business administration, data processing) shall not be given to an instructor during one academic term.

3-2-103. *Subject Preparation.* Not more than five preparations in different subjects within the same field (e.g., Accounting I, Accounting II, Keyboarding I, Business Mathematics, Business Law) shall be assigned to an instructor during one academic term.

3-2-104. *Assignments.* The requirements for full- and part-time faculty members teaching in the referenced subject areas are as follows:

- (a) A bachelor's degree and appropriate coursework in the assigned subject are required for faculty members teaching general education and other academic courses.
- (b) A bachelor's degree is required for faculty members teaching business and business administration courses. If the bachelor's degree is not in the assigned teaching field, at least two years of related work experience or evidence of specialized training or competency in the assigned teaching field is required. The burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify the qualifications of the faculty to teach their assigned courses.
- (c) Faculty members teaching courses not referenced above must demonstrate competency in the assigned teaching field, such as academic or vocational training and credentials, related work experience, licensure, or certification. The burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify the qualifications of the faculty to teach their assigned courses.

3-2-105. *Stability.* There shall be an adequate core of full- and/or part-time faculty to ensure sound direction and continuity of development for the educational programs. The institution shall demonstrate through outcomes, length of service, reasonable retention of faculty, and other measures that the core faculty ensures that the institution will meet its stated mission and objectives. The institution shall promote stability in the faculty through compensation, fringe benefits, professional growth opportunities, and other incentives.

3-2-106. *Student-Teacher Ratio.* The student-teacher ratio shall be reasonable at all times in keeping with generally accepted delivery modes and course content. In determining a reasonable ratio, the institution shall consider the following factors:

- (a) the amount of lecture given by instructors in skills-building and practice classes;
- (b) the level of existing skills of the students;
- (c) the amount of direct supervision exercised by the instructor and the availability of instructional equipment in a lab setting where there is primary instruction in a specific skill; and
- (d) the use of technology in providing alternative instruction or evaluation.

3-2-200—INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, MATERIALS

The instructional resources, audiovisual teaching equipment, and instructional materials shall be adequate to serve the needs of the institution's educational programs. The resources shall include current titles, periodicals, professional journals, or full-text online resources appropriate for the institution's educational programs. There shall be evidence that appropriate instructional resources, equipment, technology, and materials are utilized to support the educational objectives.

3-2-201. *References.* The institution shall have available and easily accessible to faculty and

students standard reference works appropriate to the curriculum. Major consideration will be given to the variety of volumes, periodicals, online resources and information technology readily available to students and faculty, recency of publications, appropriateness, and relevance to the programs.

3-2-202. *Distribution of Resources and Materials.* The instructional resources and references may be consolidated or may be distributed throughout the educational facility, or they may be provided by the institution under contract with an external organization on behalf of its student body which ensures access to library resources and references pertinent to the programs offered by the institution. Easy access to and use of reference materials, periodicals, and information technology are of prime importance in determining if the institution is meeting the educational needs of its students and faculty. Availability and utilization of audiovisual equipment also are important.

3-2-203. *Inventory.* A current inventory of instructional materials and equipment shall be maintained by the institution.

3-2-204. *Budget.* Budget allocations and expenditures for instructional resources, equipment, and materials shall be sufficient to meet the needs and fulfill objectives of the institution's programs.

TITLE III

Chapter 3 STANDARDS FOR OCCUPATIONAL ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

In addition to the general standards in Chapter 1, which apply to all institutions, the following standards apply specifically to institutions offering occupational associate's degree programs. Occupational associate's degree programs are those programs which award associate's degrees that contain less than 15 semester hours, 22.5 quarter hours, or the equivalent of general education.

3-3-100–STATE AUTHORITY

The institution must be legally authorized by the appropriate state education agency, where such authority exists, to confer the associate's degree.

3-3-200–EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

3-3-201. Objectives. The objectives of an occupational associate's degree program are an extension of the institution's awareness of its mission and its application to its constituencies. An institution applying for the inclusion of an occupational associate's degree program shall demonstrate that its programs and courses are appropriate to its mission and to its specific goals and objectives.

Occupational associate's degree programs should emphasize both achievement of vocational objectives and general education. This emphasis requires courses in general education that are relevant both quantitatively and qualitatively to the chosen degree.

3-3-202. Education Requirements. The minimum number of credits required for the occupational associate's degree shall be 60

semester hours, 90 quarter hours, or 1800 clock hours, normally earned over a period of four semesters, six quarters, or the equivalent. Transfer and award of credit may be granted for appropriate work at other institutions.

There shall be a minimum of 10 semester hours, 15 quarter hours, or their equivalent in general education or applied general education courses. The catalog must identify the courses that satisfy the general education requirements, and it must provide an explanation of the course numbering system.

The Council's expectations for general education and applied general education are outlined in the Glossary section.

3-3-203. Curriculum. The curriculum shall quantitatively and qualitatively approximate the standards at other institutions offering occupational associate's degrees, with due allowance for meeting special objectives. The primary purpose of the degree shall be technical in nature with courses designed to assist students in the application of these skills in the workplace. Instructional procedures, texts, materials, and technology shall be appropriate to the purposes, curriculums, and standards of institutions offering occupational associate's degrees. Evidence shall be provided that curricular offerings require appropriate use of library resources.

3-3-204. Enrollment. Enrollment in the second year of a two-year program must be sufficient to support regularly scheduled classes and laboratory work. Second-year work shall be based upon appropriate first-year prerequisites.

3-3-300–FACULTY

3-3-301. *Preparation.* An institution offering occupational associate's degrees shall have an adequate and competent faculty working under conditions that encourage the best efforts of each individual. In judging competence, consideration shall be given to the academic preparation and experience of each instructor.

3-3-302. *Assignments.* During any academic term, a faculty member shall not be assigned to teach in more than three fields of instruction (e.g., secretarial studies, business administration, data processing). Not more than five preparations in different subjects (e.g., Accounting I, Accounting II, Keyboarding I, Business Mathematics, and Business Law) shall be assigned to an instructor during one academic term. Instructors shall be assigned based on their major and minor academic preparation and related experience. The size of the faculty shall be appropriate to the total student enrollment.

The requirements for full- and part-time faculty members teaching in the referenced subject areas are as follows:

- (a) A bachelor's degree and appropriate coursework in the assigned subject are required for faculty members teaching general education and other academic courses.
- (b) A bachelor's degree is required for faculty members teaching business and business administration courses. If the bachelor's degree is not in the assigned teaching field, at least two years of related work experience or evidence of specialized training or competency in the assigned teaching field is required. The burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify the qualifications of the faculty to teach their assigned courses.
- (c) Faculty members teaching courses not referenced above must demonstrate competency in the assigned teaching field, such as academic or vocational

training and credentials, related work experience, licensure, or certification. The burden is on the institution to demonstrate and justify the qualifications of the faculty to teach their assigned courses.

3-3-303. *Teaching Load.* An instructor's teaching load, including night school, shall not exceed 32 clock hours per week, except that an overload of not more than one subject per term for additional compensation is permitted. Teaching loads may differ when using alternative methods of instruction and must be commensurate with the type of delivery method utilized. For purposes of this calculation, assigned courses offered by nontraditional or distance learning modes of instruction are deemed to consist of one clock hour per week for each unit of academic credit awarded.

3-3-304. *Stability.* There shall be an adequate core of full- and part-time faculty to ensure sound direction and continuity of development for the educational programs. The institution shall demonstrate through outcomes, length of service, reasonable retention of faculty, and other measures that the core faculty ensures that the institution will meet its stated mission and objectives. The institution shall promote stability in the faculty through compensation, fringe benefits, professional growth opportunities, and other incentives.

3-3-305. *Student-Teacher Ratio.* The student-teacher ratio shall be reasonable at all times in keeping with generally accepted delivery modes and course content. In determining a reasonable ratio, the institution shall consider the following factors:

- (a) the amount of lecture given by instructors in skills-building and practice classes;
- (b) the level of existing skills of the students;
- (c) the amount of direct supervision exercised by the instructor and the availability of instructional equipment in

a lab setting where there is primary instruction in a specific skill; and

- (d) the use of technology in providing alternative instruction or evaluation.

3-3-400-LIBRARY, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY

3-3-401. *Staff.* An individual with the ability to maintain the resources and to assist students and faculty shall be designated to oversee the resources of the institution.

3-3-402. *Budget.* An annual library budget, appropriate to the size and scope of the institution and the programs offered, shall be established and the allocation expended for the purchase of books, periodicals, library equipment, and other resource and reference materials.

3-3-403. *Function.* The library function is shaped by the educational programs of the institution. Appropriate reference, research, and information resources must be made available to enhance, augment, and support the curricular and educational offerings. The resources shall include the study, reading, and information technology facilities necessary to make the educational programs effective. The ultimate test of the library's adequacy is determined by the extent to which its resources support all the courses offered by the institutions.

3-3-404. *Use and Accessibility.* In evaluating the use of library resources by students, consideration shall be given to accessibility and to methods used by the faculty to encourage the use of these resources by students. Records of physical and/or online circulation and inventory shall be current and accurate.

Physical and/or online library materials and services must be available at times consistent with the typical student's schedule in both day and evening programs. Easy access to and use of reference materials, periodicals, and information technology are of prime importance in determining if the institution is meeting the

educational needs of its students and faculty. If online resources are utilized, an appropriate number of terminals shall be provided for student use. Interlibrary agreements are not substitutes for an institution's library, but rather a means to supplement the institution's holdings in limited areas. In determining the appropriateness of such agreements, consideration will be given to the uniqueness of the lending library's collection, provisions for interlibrary loans, and the degree of accessibility to the students.

3-3-405. *Holdings.* The institution shall have available and easily accessible standard reference works, professional journals, and current periodicals appropriate to the curriculum. Consideration also shall be given to supplementary library resources contracted by the institution and online resources available to its student body.

3-3-406. *Acquisitions.* Library acquisitions are the joint responsibility of the faculty and library staff, with the greater amount of input emanating from the faculty. Moreover, it is the faculty's responsibility to inspire, motivate, and direct student usage of the library resources.

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